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FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO
TO RUEHPH/CDC ATLANTA GA IMMEDIATE
RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6250
RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RHMFIUU/DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUEHRC/DEPT OF AGRICULTURE WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
INFO RUEHXC/ALL US CONSULATES IN MEXICO COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA IMMEDIATE 2500

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 MEXICO 001171

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/MEX, WHA/PDA
STATE FOR OES/IHB, PA, CAPRESS
STATE FOR MED/DASHO (MCFADDEN, RINALDO, KEYES)
STATE FOR MED/DIR (PENNER)
CDC FOR CCID/NCPDCID, CCID/NCIRD AND COGH/DGPPC

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [KSQA](#) [TBIO](#) [MX](#)

SUBJECT: SITREP 1 - SWINE FLU OUTBREAK IN MEXICO CITY

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: As a precaution, Mexican authorities closed schools and other public institutions in the Federal District and State of Mexico April 24, 2009 as officials announced an outbreak of the H1N1 strain of "swine flu". At the invitation of the GOM, two CDC officials will travel to Mexico April 24 to participate in an assessment of the outbreak. Mexican officials have been open in this process and also have reached out for assistance to PAHO, WHO and the Canadian government. Reliable statistics have been difficult to verify, largely due to internal systems.

¶2. (U) MEXICAN GOVERNMENT ACTIONS:

As a precaution, Mexican authorities closed preschools, schools and universities in the Federal District and State of Mexico April 24, 2009 as the Mexican Secretariat of Health announced hundreds of cases of flu in the country, some of which may be the H1N1 strain of "swine flu". Some other public institutions, such as museums, are also closed through Sunday, April 26. Officials will announce decisions regarding any closures beyond April 26 at a later date. No businesses or commercial ventures have been asked to close. The Mexican Ministry of Health issued a press release late on April 23 advising the public of the closures, providing information about symptoms and suggested ways in which the public can reduce the risk of infection. The Minister of Health held a press conference late April 24 in which he announced:

--The virus was identified in collaboration with U.S. and Canada laboratories.

--The number of people infected with the virus has not increased.

--The GOM has a toll-free phone number for information and health orientation about flu: 01.800.123.1010

--The Ministry of Health has sufficient supplies of medicines and anti-viral vaccines.

--WHO has not declared any "quarantine" for Mexico. The borders are open.

--There is no risk from eating pork.

The GOM has established a Coordination and Logistics Taskforce to compile information on the outbreak. The Taskforce briefs senior GOM officials on a regular basis on developments.

The National Center of Epidemiology and Disease Control has informally requested diagnostic lab materials and surgical masks. We have asked our contacts to submit a formal request with specific requirements.

Mexican health workers are reportedly passing out information flyers to passengers at the Mexico City airport and advising passengers who feel ill not to travel. The disease is spread by human-to-human contact. The Ministry of Agriculture confirms that in all the known fatal cases within the immediate Mexico City area, there was no direct contact with live swine.

13. (SBU) STATISTICS:

The Ministry of Health reports 20 confirmed deaths from the disease and is investigating an additional 45 deaths. There are reports of approximately 1000 cases in the Federal District and State of Mexico - in a population of over 25 million.

GOM procedures for collecting data on health outbreaks are complicated by the complexity of the health system. Mexico has many different medical entities including public hospitals and clinics, Social Security Hospitals and clinics, private hospitals and military medical facilities. They function independently and different populations have different access to the various systems. There is a Health Bureau in Mexico, but the data collected is often not complete, precise, or timely.

14. (U) MANAGEMENT ISSUES:

The EAC was convened on April 24.

There are no signs of swine flu within the Embassy community.

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Demand for the seasonal flu vaccine has been high and the Health Unit has given over 160 vaccinations.

All employees who deal with the public in the course of their duties have been given surgical masks. Embassy supplies will last for only two or three more days.

A management notice was sent to Embassy employees and an information hotline has been set up.

15. (U) SECURITY ISSUES:

Internal warden systems have been updated, trip wires have been reviewed and local guard schedules are being examined.

Information on emergency supplies is being collected.

16. (U) CONSULAR ISSUES:

A warden message was sent to the American community and posted on the Embassy webpage.

As of 1700, the ACS unit reported there had been very few calls (less than 10) from U.S. citizens inquiring about the situation.

There are no plans to curtail American Citizen or visa services at this time.

17. (U) BORDER ISSUES:

Principal officers at Mission Mexico constituent posts report no significant concerns.

In San Luis Potosi, there have been four deaths and the state government is recommending that classes be suspended.

In Mexicali, there were two flu-related deaths, but officials have stated these were not unusual cases and there is no need for a statewide or local alert about modifying activities.

18. (U) MEDIA REACTION/GENERAL POPULATION SENTIMENTS:

On Wednesday April 22 newspaper Reforma featured a front page story titled &Flu hits DF.8 According to Reforma, there were five reported deaths and 218 cases of influenza in Mexico City hospitals. On April 23 media outlets ran the Health Secretariat,s &epidemiological warning8 on flu, adding that in just over a month 20 people had died from it in the country. On April 24 all Mexico City newspapers featured Secretary of Health Cordoba Villalobos, announcement that the federal government decided to suspend all classes in Mexico City and the State of Mexico schools on Friday; all stories included the recommendations of the Secretary in regards to personal habits to avoid contracting the disease. According to Reforma, &authorities presume that the new virus came from the U.S.,8 since the CDC announced two cases of swine flu in southern California on April 21. The electronic media, particularly radio, has been reporting all day on developments on the case, including the World Health Organization,s issuing of a Level 3 warning, and statements by WHO and CDC officials like Richard Besser who said that, for the time being, U.S. health authorities would not reinforce security or restrict traveling. Visit Mexico City's Classified Web Site at <http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/wha/mexicocity> and the North American Partnership Blog at <http://www.intelink.gov/communities/state/nap/> / BASSETT